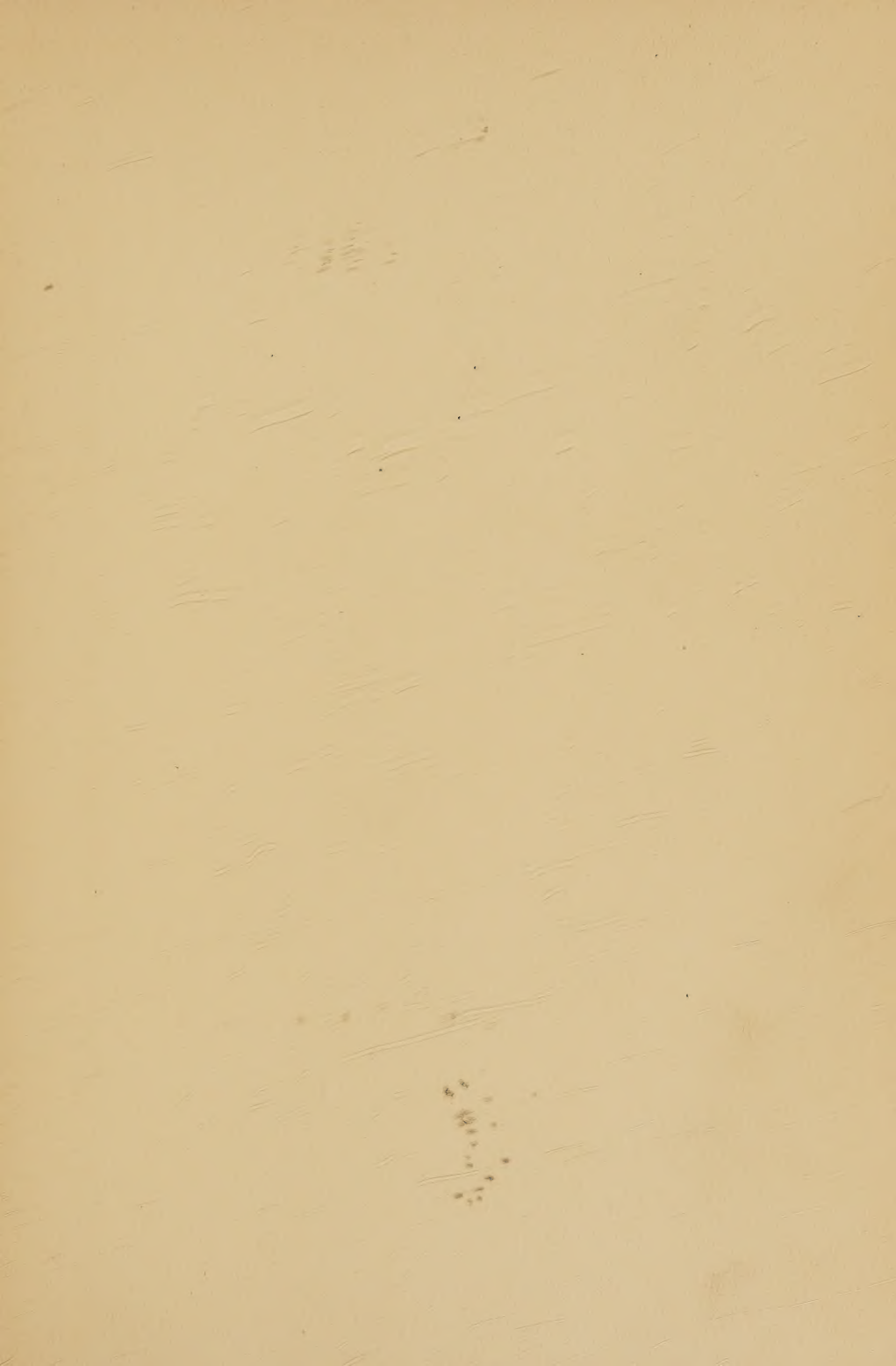



PEP



FEUCHTWANGER

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PEP

Also by Lion Feuchtwanger

TWO ANGLO-SAXON PLAYS
THE UGLY DUCHESS
POWER

In preparation

SUCCESS

a novel

LION FEUCHTWANGER

PEP

J. L. Wetcheek's American Song Book

English version by

DOROTHY THOMPSON

Drawings by

CONSTANTIN ALADJALOV



New THE VIKING PRESS *York*

1929

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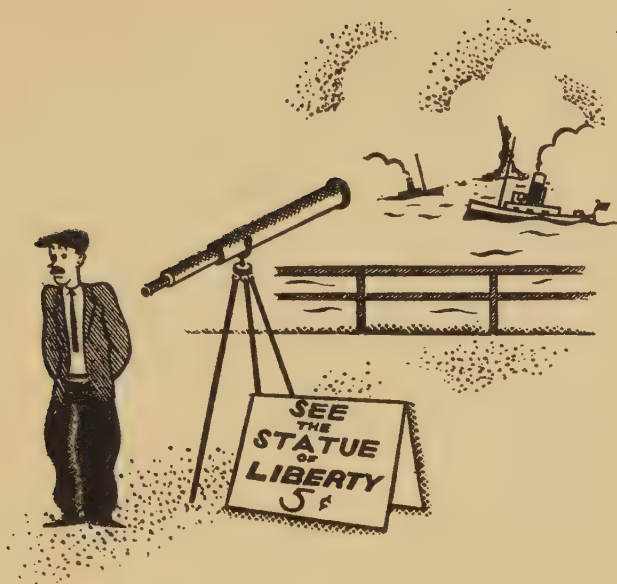
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For that good American

SINCLAIR LEWIS

In admiration and comradeship





Preface

“The Ballads of Mr. B. W. Smith” by J. L. Wetcheek began to appear in Germany in the year 1924. The *Berliner Tageblatt* had received two or three of them from a German writer who claimed to have been amused by them and to have taken the trouble to translate them from the original

But not for the public at large. "J. L. Wetcheek" continued to put the *Homo Americanus* into rhyme. Max Hoelz, the Robin Hood of the Spartacus Movement wrote to Feuchtwanger (as to Wetcheek's translator) from a German prison, saying that the ballads had made him laugh for the first time in years. The fake translations underwent genuine translation, even into Finnish, and Russian. The ballads of Mr. B. W. Smith, supplemented by other rhymes celebrating the twentieth-century philistine, were finally dignified by a volume, under the title "Pep."

Of this volume Feuchtwanger himself says: "In 1924 I was writing a play, 'The Oil Islands.' I wanted to incorporate in it certain poems, and wrote for that purpose the first of the Smith ballads. At that time I thought that I would present the play as the work of an American author and, as a test of whether the hoax would succeed, I offered the poems, ostensibly in translation, to the *Tageblatt*."

"If these poems, to some extent, are an attempt to put Babbitt into lyrics, I certainly do not claim to be representative of America, a country I do not know. I wanted to hit at the European bourgeois, who more and more adopts for himself those characteristics which he likes to think are American, but which suit his own tendencies. In Europe today there are wide classes of people who are, perhaps, more 'American' than most inhabitants of the United States."

It is this Americanism, not America, which is the subject of 'Pep.' Mr. B. W. Smith is less 'Homo Americanus' than 'Homo Americanisatus.' ”

The attempt to put Mr. Smith into the language out of which Mr. Feuchtwanger pretended to translate him has more than taxed the powers of this translator. I fear that Mr. Smith is doomed to live as an expatriate—a peculiar fate for one who would surely consider himself to be a hundred percenter.

Dorothy Thompson

IV

TRIFLING INCIDENTS AND EXPERIENCES

On Reading a Book about Siam	29
Rhine Journey	30
The Palms of Alicante	31
Christmas Tale	32
Aranjuez	33
Russia	35
The Wandering Jew	36

V

AUTO

An Old Man in a Ford Car Speaks	41
A Young Man in a Ford Car Answers	42
Thoughts on Running over a Fellow	43

VI

PURE LYRICS

The Star Doradus	49
Christmas Carol	51

VII

BALLADS

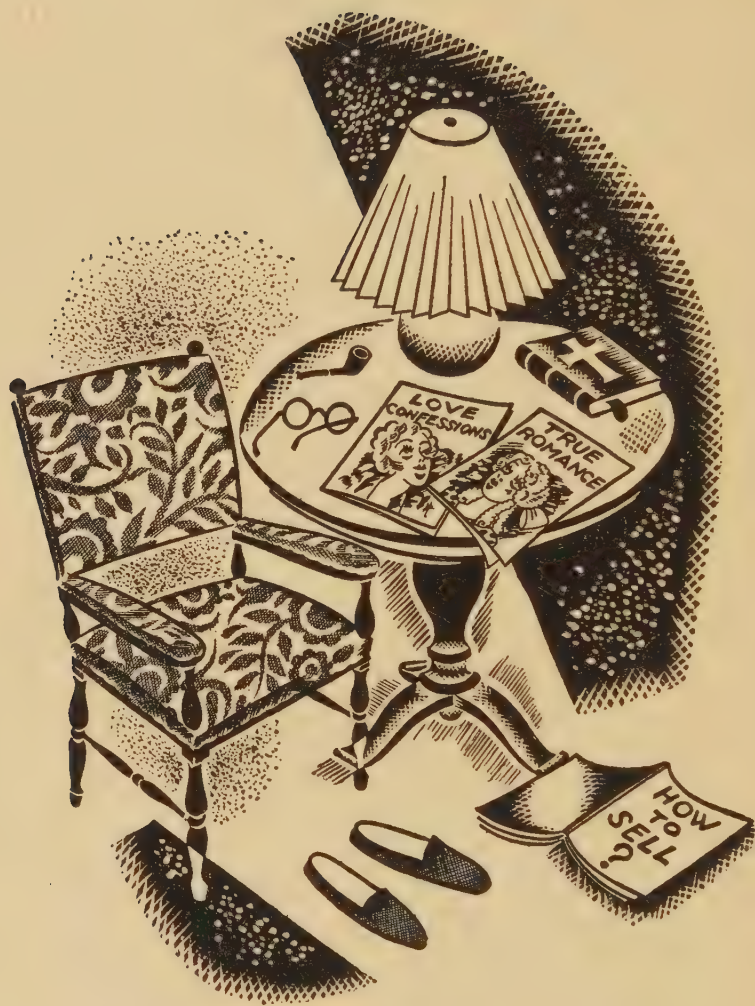
The Ballad of Louetta Frink	55
The Ballad of Mr. B. W. Smith	58

PEP



DIRECTIONS FOR USE

Forget not, you who read J. Wetcheek's verses,
no one is perfect. Brutus had some features
less praiseworthy than others. In reverses
Moses had tantrums just like lesser creatures.
If saints have traits in common with the heathen,
should Edison and Ford all perfect be then?
Can great America not laugh with those
who dare to mock the pimples on her nose?



I.
Philosophical

HEAVEN AND HELL

B. W. Smith was in the wreck of the eastbound Limited.
Only seventeen percent escaped. He was merely slightly
steamed.

- Pleased by the miracle his business friends in heaven shed
upon him, B. W., the soundest of sleepers, dreamed.

Two nights he dreamed, of Judgment Day, of heaven, of
the Lord,
and heaven seemed a Palm Beach plot where he'd retire
when older,
hell a directors' meeting where the Chairman of the Board,
the devil, did him out of stock, for some inside stockholder.

Three nights he sweated heavily; he cut out vice—or
hid it.

Resolved to look into religion, learn about this heaven;
to be a friend to all poor human sufferers—and he did it!
And took but ten point nine percent when he might have
had eleven.

PEP!

I reckon it's from pepper that we get the grand word PEP.
It means Hooray! Get busy, brother! Watch your step!
No matter what he's doing, the American that's hep
will shout it out—especially if he has lost his pep.

Pep!

He-Americans, hundred percenters, can swing a vocabulary
of maybe 700 words. A million a mother-in-law.
Chauffeurs (from cussing) about 900; President Coolidge
nary.
Old Bill Shakespeare had 14,000; 3000 for Bernard Shaw.
But what the deuce is the use of them all? Just one is
necessary—

Pep!

It's a first-class word; it's a fine and dandy
tabloid form of the Coué trick.
In the States they find it mighty handy,
a cinch to remember, short and slick—

Pep!

Pep is the goods for any situation,
to use with folks or dogs, with cars, or cops;

a substitute and no punk imitation
for chewing gum or pipes or even schnapps.
In fact it's mighty useful anywhere—
Oh, maybe not for prayer.

Pep!

HUNGER AND LOVE

Professor Harry Mawkins made the following experiment:
He locked up in a cage adorned with charged electric plates
a half a dozen male rats, barred by this electric cerement
on one side from their food, and on the other from their
mates.

The rats were two and seventy hours checked by this
electricity.

Then, after two and seventy hours of hunger and love's
heat,

one of the males was maddened to meet death in his
lubricity.

The others all defied the lightning too, but sprang—to eat!

And thereupon the good professor altered the experiment.
This time he tried six female rats, plates in the same
position.

And after two and seventy hours, *five* galloped to love's
merriment—

One toward nutrition!

B. W. Smith read of this great experiment excitedly.

The data seemed informative, significant, and true.

So he gave himself to the roofing trade with double zeal,
delightedly.

The check he sent his mistress every week he cut in two.

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

Beastly is a bad digestion, and a pest
a balance sheet with only seven or eight
percent of profit. Worse than all of this
is nightly sleeplessness. A lovely test
was made by H. H. Gramer, he the great,
the busiest doctor of Milwaukee, Wis.

For with the microscope the doctor showed
on film, in ribbons tastefully arranged,
that with insomnia, a ganglion node,
at last, and not to its advantage, changed.

America—best land on earth, by thunder!
South Fitzborough! Of all its towns the crack!
And in that town—everybody recognizes it—it's perfectly
well known—
my house is admitted to be a wonder.
And I, B. W. Smith, I boss that shack.

And yet they rub
me wrong, these granted facts. Sometimes at night,
South Fitzborough, my house, my friends, my club.
America—even I—don't seem quite right.
Pep! Such a fool thought is illogical.
Pep! In the future I shall up and fight,
think out deep questions—you know—theological,
or anyhow, drink coffee less at night.



II.
Sociological

STATISTICS

How many calories average humans, by sea or land, in
winter or summer require,
how many autos are made per hour, what is the suicidal
percent,
how many cigarettes Europe, America, Asia smoke, what
brands they desire,
how many niggers in vaudeville, how many hands
grasped by the president—

God has all the figures checked,
and the federal bureau for statistics, with its various
branches and also its admirable corps of field agents
in every warehouse and mill—
that nothing escapes God's intellect,
develops itself to the greatest skill.

B. W. Smith, his mind trained in business, most arduous
school of large affairs,
sees that statistics, beyond question, are a very significant
field.

Yet, sometimes, listening to music, it seems as though he
scarcely cares

just what percent of commercial phosphorus eventually
his corpse will yield.

MONOGAMY

Smith, B. W.—Wallboard, Tiles, and Roofing—
once on a business trip to Akron* sought
a cabaret which advertised its hoofing,
and gazing on the chorus ladies, thought:

“Biologically considered, or so far as I can figure it out,
anyway, there is no ground
for virtue. Beasts are not monogamous.
The whale, mosquito, cat, the hare and hound
grab loving as it comes, without a fuss.

“Yet civic consciousness and sound religion,
these are my birthright, sinless, deep, eugenic.
I do not look on life like pig or pigeon.
Besides! Monogamy is hygienic!”

And thus B. W. comfortably padded
his faith that he was full of chaste morality.

*Mr. Feuchtwanger has never been in the United States, hence the fantasy
about Akron!

And yet, a little footnote must be added—
that in that cabaret's conviviality,

the ladies were not all like Winsome Winnie
shown on the billboard's blah.

Each of them was, in fact, a painted, skinny,
grandmamma.

EVIL INSTINCTS

(Breach of Promise)

Zoologists state that evil instincts will even the animals
shackle.

The inkfish finds in a fish line a singular lack of
glamorousness.

His excellent vision detects the bait and sometimes even
the tackle.

So fishermen catch the inkfish by stimulating his
amorousness.

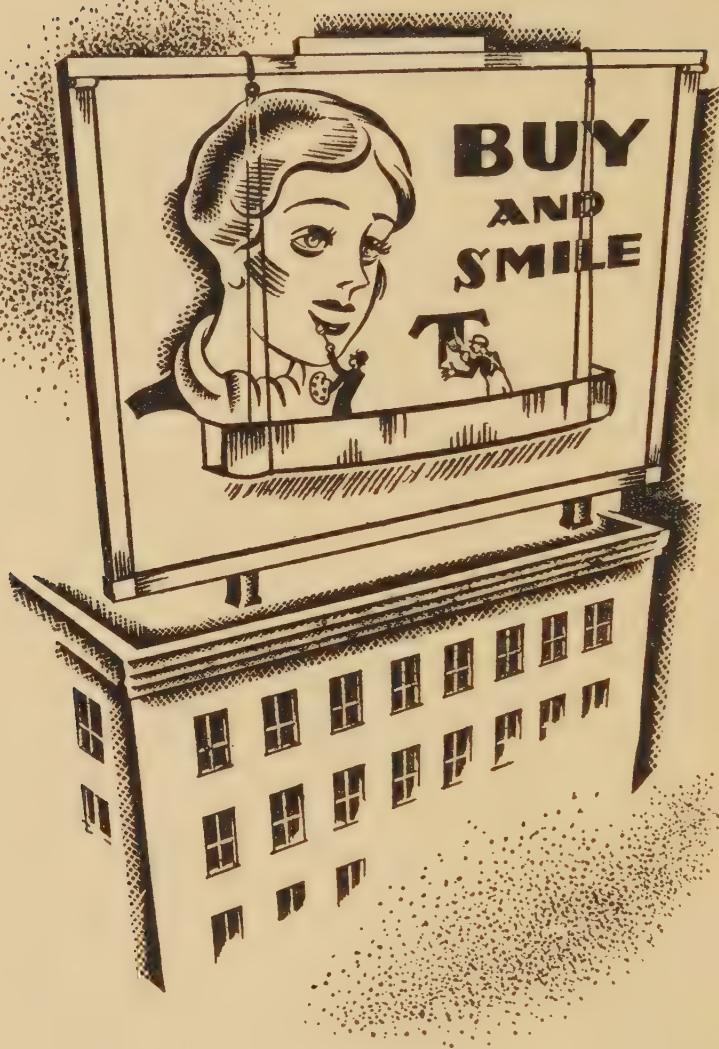
The fishhook they cloy with a female.

By instincts no inkfish can dim,
he annoys, he is coy with the female,
and they yank out the female and him.

This incident shows upon what a sound basis our legal
procedure is founded.

What a poor irresponsible fish cannot do is forbidden,
of course, to a human.

If fish through their lack of control are by nature thus
grievously snared and impounded,
should justice not smite down a man who with falseness
has promised to marry a woman?



III.
Art

ART

Five thousand Yankee soldiers and five thousand Yankee
tars

formed with their living bodies a great shield in the park.

The white duck formed the Indian head, and made the
scattered stars,

the khaki made the background, dark.

Then H. L. Pumphrey, the cracker king, who hitherto
would brag

that Shakespeare, Poe, and Raphael were none of 'em
real smart,

first recognized there, as he saw that living, moving flag,
Art.

MUSIC

The consumption of energy in presenting modern music
is now undue.

Whereas a Brahms song requires an energy of thirty-one
point six to maximum thirty-seven units per minute
to transmit its sounds,

in a jazz revue,

in the chorus alone the expended energy runs from a
hundred eighty-nine to a hundred ninety-three point
seven foot pounds.

But Jan Ten Klot, ornithologist, demonstrates by
experimentation
that hens react by gratifying increase in laying to better
music—and he advises a good mouth-organ to use
as an elementary step.

So music has practical justification
in added pep.

THEATRE

Because Smith's partner failed to arrive on time, being, in
consequence of a blow-out, dead—
Smith frequently had told him to drive slow—
since the evening was spoiled, Smith shook his head,
and went to a show.

He tried, being near it, a J. L. Wetchek play.
On the stage, people neither rich nor swells,
talked in the manner you hear every day,
of autos, business, radios, hotels.



Five bucks, thought Mr. Smith, is an awful price,
to hear folks talk just like me and the boys!

And yet, he sat there, held as in a vise,
for—something shook his usual equipoise.

Although the play had nothing philosophical—
they talked of gold and gin, discussed the dollar,
were commonplace as newspapers, and as topical—
yet, Mr. Smith sat sweating in his collar,

and thought—and he remembered it long after—
of God, and Was Life Anyhow Worthwhile?

And though five dollars was no cause for laughter
if lost, yet Mr. Smith began to smile,

thinking: five berries buys a decent meal,
or one of those silver thingumjigs for the car;
still, geniuses aren't common, and I feel
perhaps Wetchek is one, as Shakespeare and Lindbergh
are.

The chauffeur driving Smith back home that night
thought: "Damn it, what's that funny noise, that ringing?
I thought I'd put the carburetor right.
Or—no! It can't be Mr. Smith is singing!"

REVUE

Worn out by His executive work, one night
God thought He'd rest his nerves, and see a play.
He'd heard the Follies were a splendid sight,
"And if they're poor," He thought, "I needn't stay!"

Eight dollars bought a seat in the front row.
God sat down quietly, and mild, resolving
that for this once, no matter what the show
was like, He'd do a general absolving.

Sixteen consecutive numbers God forgave.
Condoned the living Caryatids, forswore
His wrath at lustful ladies. "To deprave
is plainly their intent, but what a bore!"

thought God, and gently folded up His chair,
hoping to slip out quietly, unobserved.
"Really, I must have just a whiff of air,
lest I should give a judgment undeserved.

I did laugh once. That nigger boy was comic,"
thought God. "And by My promise all are shriven.
They are but creatures, largely anatomic—
but how shall I, their Maker, be forgiven!"



IV.

Trifling Incidents and Experiences

ON READING A BOOK ABOUT SIAM

The Plakka, the fighter of Siam,
if placed by himself in a dish,
is no more excited than I am,
but behaves like the usual fish.

But if through partitions transparent
he sees that a neighbor is near,
he vibrates, his rage is apparent,
For he colors in anger and fear.

And if he can get at the other
in banners of ruby and gold,
he attacks, and he eats up his brother,
and again he turns mud-gray, and cold.

I admit it's a poor fish that I am.
That slick garage guy did me in.
But I'm not any warfish of Siam,
and if he did sell me a tin

of punk oil, you never would know it
from the way that I *looked*, you can bet.
I was sore, but I never would show it—
but wait—and I'll get that bird yet!

RHINE JOURNEY

(*Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten*)

Once I floated down the Rhine with some German
honeymooners—
Golly, there were ancient castles, and a lot of chromo
scenes—
well, those Boches were always singing—they were
musikalisch spooners—
that they had a secret pain, and, “I don’t know what it
means.”

How do they get that way? If my son talked such rot,
you can bet your bottom dollar that I’d give the doc a
ring.

Wailing on about a fairy tale! Indigestion, like as not!
Can’t they find a *cheerful* subject, if they’ve really
got to sing!

Way I look at it is this: if you’re feeling rather blue,
and you don’t know what it means, take a little nip of gin.
Pep! And if you think you’ve got a secret pain or two,
take a dose of bromo seltzer, or perhaps an aspirin.

To be sad when there's no reason—furthermore, to *sing*
about it—
seems to me to be neurotic; foreign, anyhow, and funny.
Wouldn't trust the business sense of such folks. No. I'd
doubt it—
and I'd certainly investigate before we loan them money.

THE PALMS OF ALICANTE

Spain, and the pious South, taking no chances
with nature, tack bleached palm leaves to their doorways,
(*Phoenix dactylphora* L.) whose branches
avert the lightning and protect in more ways,
they think, than one. The process isn't costly.
The finest inner leaves are bound so tightly
that chlorophyll cannot pass through, the ghostly
and fan-like shapes shine on each doorpost whitely.
A town in Alicante (Spain) has made a
fortune in palm leaves. Exports now reach nearly
a million. Pious Catholics have paid a
price for their magic, and repeat it, yearly.

This custom, which is *Spanish, quaint, religious*
in California, should be a knockout.

The market there—potential—is prodigious.
What's needed is a good live wire to block out
the right campaign. Of course all superstition
should be avoided, but a snappy slogan
like "Palms for Luck," and salesmanship ambition
should put the palm leaf with the berry (Logan).

We'd ask no fire protection from great God.
We can afford both palm and lightning rod.

CHRISTMAS TALE

In Zehlendorf, Berlin, on Christmas eve,
in a store there, Santa Claus appeared,
just as the salesfolk were about to leave.
He wore a red jacket and a beard.

Hands up! he cried, and pointed with a gun
at the director, who thus goaded
rushed Santa, Santa shot while on the run,
revealing that the gun was loaded.

Santa was caught, and testified later,
answering the charge of wounding three men,
he was in private life merely a waiter,
now unemployed, and father of ten.

The object of his hold-up was to get,
by means fair or foul, a Christmas tree.
Think that a man *on Christmas* could forget
the sanctity of property!

ARANJUEZ

For certain private functions, performed, of course, alone,
King Charles the Fourth of Spain had a special seat erected,
the background hung with damask, a handsome little
 throne,
and he placed around about it, *objets d'art* which he'd
 selected.

(You can see all this yourself in the Aranjuez palace,
circa 1788, and with two stars in the guide book.
Only certain guides will show it—those who have a little
 malice



against royalty, perhaps—and the tourists take a side
look.)

One sees a bird of ivory, the king was pleased to
contemplate,
and though to need æsthetic aids, implies, thought Smith,
deficiency,
we must admit, however, that this monarch, though
degenerate,
knew how to get some *use* from art, and turn it to
efficiency.

RUSSIA

B. W. Smith met a Russian lady at Nice.
(The doc advised Nice. Smith's nerves were beginning to
balk.
Too much roofing.) Smith thought her a damn pretty piece
and called up a waiter to help him talk.

He told her his income, turnover, and annual sales.
He spoke—through the waiter—of markets and sport.
He told her his yearly consumption of tar-paper bales,
so she'd know who was paying her court.

She on the other hand talked of art.
Matisse and Picasso, Kokoschka, Expressionism.
Humph, thought Smith, it's better that we should part.
She's tainted with Bolshevism.

THE WANDERING JEW

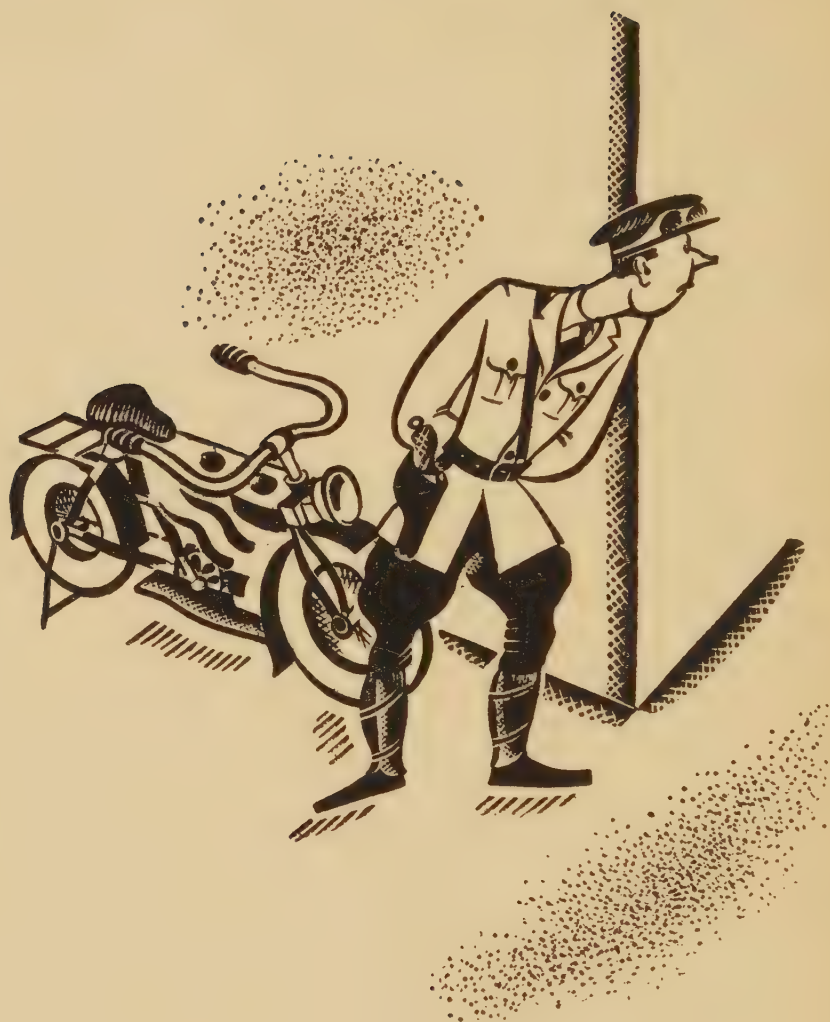
B. W. Smith in a Chrysler Six stopped at a filling station,
and there encountered the Wandering Jew.
Not that he recognized the fellow's nation,
but about cars he knew a thing or two,
and Mr. Smith could bet that flivver's date
was 1908.

B. W. Smith was known at home as something of a kidder.
"A nice museum piece, a swell antique,"
he said. "She's worth two bits to any bidder,
or fifty cents, if you'd throw in the squeak."
"Egypt had chariots," the other said,
"but the Jews came in ahead."

"Well, I suppose even a travelling rabbi sometimes gets
there,"
said Smith. "The roofing business needs more speed.

The way your buggy looks to me, I swear
it's time to plant her, for she's gone to seed.
My car in neutral is a faster bird
than yours in third."

"In speed," said the Jew, "I admit I can't compete.
I count on mileage, and this ancient model,
though travelling not much faster than your feet
can toddle,
holds the endurance record, and I guess," he said,
"will hold it when you're dead."
With this he started up his engine squeaky—
"My God," said Smith, "how cheeky!"



V.
Auto

AN OLD MAN IN A FORD CAR SPEAKS

I admit I like to ride along in my Ford
but I can't see the sense of racing.
I find it fun to read the ads on each billboard—
and what is one chasing?

Lots of folks, I observe, cannot bear going slow.
Speeding seems to give them a great kick.
It doesn't seem to matter to them where they go,
but if passed, they feel sick.

Albert Einstein, the noted German professor,
proved the relativity of speed.
Odd that folks still let horsepower be their assessor,
when there's really no need.

What's certain is, if you drive the speediest car,
that will not accelerate your breath.
Race as you may, you're no further from any star—
and no further from death!

A YOUNG MAN IN A FORD CAR ANSWERS

Nonsense! I do not speed to be superior.

Speed is my way of getting lit.

Although it's true—the pokey *are* inferior;
the fast, today, are It.

I do not care if some old star is nearer
—so that remark is just a waste of breath—
the risks one takes make life seem only dearer,
and as for death—

we all die once. It's true I brought the last call
to 20 hens, 3 dogs, a cat or two,
a nigger—not my fault—I guess that's all——
The dinge's widow had to go and sue.

I've paid for every accident I've had.
I'm quits; I guess that in the last police court
my case will be dismissed. I'm not so bad,
nor worse than you, Dad, just a different sort.

THOUGHTS ON RUNNING OVER A FELLOW

Dogs are intelligent. Cyclist, hen, or pedestrian
loses its head.

A cyclist encountering Smith's Chrysler was no more
terrestrial—

Dead.

Smith looked at the corpse, at the not well assembled
assortment,
dismaying in aggregate,
and began, while maintaining correct, noncommittal
deportment,
to meditate:

“He may have a baby—or several—now he's in paradise
(splendid idea, immortality).

Sad, better transport can only be purchased with sacrifice.

Every fatality

adds to the rates which the companies charge for
insurance.

Wish I could beat a

hasty retreat, but my line is a cool self-assurance—

Media in Vita—”

(Because, while he thought all these things he went on
calmly smoking
a fat black cigar,
bystanders were murmuring of hanging, and burning, and
choking,
and feathers and tar.)

Yet the judge found that Smith and his Chrysler had
wholly the right of it,
but Smith, in confusion,
could never put out of his memory, wholly, the sight of it,
nor reach other conclusion

than: "Accident premiums are certainly bound to increase
as progress in transport keeps raising the rate of fatality.
There never was anything pleasant in thoughts of decease,
and a mighty smart guy must have thought up the soul's
immortality.

"I've forgotten my Latin—but there's something the
Scripture saith,
like 'Media in Vita'—we're always in midst of death."

FLOREST



VI.
Pure Lyrics

THE STAR DORADUS

Doradus is a hundred thousand light years from our nation.

Hot dog!

But Europe is still further from Americanization.

Baby!

The quota law keeps out the undesirables effectively.

Oh, Boy!

The Nordic Strain is organized, and sells ideals collectively.

Sweet Mama!

Our luxury production is, to Europe, most surprising.

Three Cheers!

The export trade of Germany and England is not rising.

Hot damn!

Progress and social order, God sees we do not lack.

Zowie!

On bolshevistic Europe he turns His Holy Back.

Hallelujah!



aladjálov.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

In Bethlehem (Palestine) between night and morn,
25th December, 1 B.C., Jesus was born.

Hallo! Glory to God in the highest!

Three Kings from the deserts of Asia rode fleet,
to lay first-class tokens at the newborn child's feet.

Hallo! And peace on earth!

In this year of our Lord in the old U. S. A.,
we pay Him our tributes, in our own joyous way.

Hallo! Glory to God in the highest!

Let bootleg flow freely; what killjoy'd refuse.
Last Christmas twelve men and a dinge died of booze.

Hallo! And peace on earth!

**IN GOD
WE TRUST**



VII.
Ballads

THE BALLAD OF LOUETTA FRINK

I, Louetta Frink, everything considered, am a lucky girl.

I live in Frink Mansion, an ordered, elegant life.

I own three motors; am what the Sunday papers call

“in the whirl,”

and it's not bad to be William Washington Frink's wife.

William W.'s income tax is a hundred thousand dollars.

I've had two babies, and my figure didn't suffer.

It is true William W. wears number seventeen collars,

but he's a good provider, and not such a duffer.

He took me to see Coolidge and Queen Marie of Rumania.

I'm on sixteen boards and nearly every committee.

William W. doesn't drink much; golf is his only mania—

I guess there's not a busier woman in our city.

I go to meetings, kiss my babies, dress, shop, play at

games—

why is it, then, that always my secret heart complains:

Etta, Etta, Etta!

You have a temperament,

take time for sentiment,

just once be free, Etta!

Only to see, Etta,

what life is really for.

Etta, Etta, Etta!

Confess it's now a bore!

Once on a trip to Europe in a picturesque Balkan city
I had a tire puncture, and I met an *advocat*;
he was very badly dressed indeed, it really was a pity
that he'd never gone in for sport, nor known what was
what.

He was a revolutionist; practised law but incidentally.
He said that I was beautiful, though full of poses.
(Think of *me*, Louetta Frink!) But his strange eyes looked
intently,
and the air in that crazy place was full of roses.
I don't know what possessed me; he almost persuaded me
to stay.

It's just as well I didn't, for afterward I read
they'd hanged him—just imagine—I laughed when I
thought what Bill would say—
Just the same I often wish that once I'd lost my head.

Etta, Etta, Etta!

Why not some sentiment?

Why not just once relent?

Just once be free, Etta,
only to see, Etta,
a life that's less a bore.
Etta, Etta, Etta!
What's all your living for?

Now the season begins again; I shall give a big reception,
shall go to the White House; give seven small dinners;
my guests will be everyone important, without an
exception,
—all the biggest senators, and artists, and sinners.
I must see to it that my daughter, who is growing up,
marry
someone who has a certain position. And my son
must not be just a business man like every Tom, Dick, and
Harry—
in Rome I met a diplomat; I'd like him to be one.
Yet—in the end—what's left for me except to sweat on
my last bed,
powder my nose for the last time; even, perhaps, pray?
Not that I think that religion will help you much when
you are dead—
and so, perhaps, instead of prayer, I'll just softly say:

Etta, Etta, Etta!
At last some sentiment!
Don't bother to repent!
You'll soon be free, Etta!
Perhaps you'll see, Etta,
to *die* is not a bore!
Etta, Etta, Etta!
To *die* is not a bore!

THE BALLAD OF MR. B. W. SMITH

His dollars would have paved his house for him—
ten bedrooms, seven baths, all told—
and yet they could not buy what would not bore him:
sunshine when he was cold.

At fifty-six he needed little sleep.
Digestion poor, he couldn't eat.
Had twenty good teeth, which he hoped to keep—
preserved from sweet, or meat.

What should he buy, now that he owned all things?
Mountains, and sea, and sky, and God?

And the wind's flute sounds, and the thrush that sings?
His checks came back. How odd.

He opened up his checkbook to the sky
but the sky showed no expression.
Between the clouds there peeped no envious eye.
Great was Smith's depression.

See him sitting there, with twenty good teeth,
and six porcelain—five gold,
chagrined and disappointed, underneath
a sun not bought nor sold.

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